

LEGISLATIVE RECRUITMENT AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM CHANGE: THE CASE OF ROMANIA

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Abstract¹

This paper analyzes the transformations in Romanian parties' legislative recruitment strategies that are likely to occur with the change in the electoral system, by looking at the 2008 parliamentary elections and the data gathered from questionnaires with the new MPs. The main finding is a general move towards more local patronage-oriented recruitment, determined by the importance in this process of local party officials (presidents of county councils and mayors) as well as of private sponsors. The new electoral system seems to decrease the chances of women getting elected, while parties chose to delegate much of the campaigning costs, thus favoring well-to-do candidates. Scores of decentralization and inclusiveness of selectorates are computed and the article proposes a series of explanations for the intra-party mutations since 2004, when the last empirical study was conducted on the Romanian legislative recruitment.

1. Introduction

The selection and nomination of candidates for public offices (subject or not to electoral competition) is one of the main functions of political parties and political systems as a whole. This function can be performed transparently and following inclusive procedures, or on the contrary - behind closed doors, at top levels, thus beyond the scrutiny of ordinary citizens or rank and

¹ The authors would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers for their very useful advice. We also feel indebted to Sergiu Gherghina, Levente Littvay and Valentina Dimulescu for their support.

file members of parties. It is necessary to say that political scientists have recurrently deemed the mechanisms of recruitment and their results to have influence on the legitimacy and stability of political systems, as well as on the quality of policy outcomes. These aspects represent, in Pippa Norris' terms, "normative concerns about political recruitment"² and they are constantly the subject of empirical trials, proxy measurements through which scholars assess the reality behind the expectations. Going deeper into the field, any literature review of political elite recruitment studies will certainly indicate as the most common topic the mechanisms and patterns of legislative recruitment.³ The main explanations given by scholars focusing their attention in this direction refer to the importance of parliaments for modern democracies – they embody the quintessential function of representation⁴, and refer as well as to the amplitude of this selection process.

Moreover, legislative recruitment is privileged as a useful analytical tool in understanding political parties: how decentralized, how democratic and how permeable they are to the influence of interest groups. As the radical statement of E. E. Schattschneider goes: "[H]e who can make the nominations is the owner of the party."⁵ This "owner" can be de-constructed into the so-called 'selectorate' – "party organizations, the personal cliques, the groups of dignitaries... involved in the selection of candidates and in their presentation to constituencies".⁶

2 Pippa Norris, ed., *Passages to Power: Legislative Recruitment in Advanced Democracies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

3 See for example: Robert Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*, (Prentice Hall, 1976); Lester Seligman et al, *Patterns of Recruitment. A State Chooses its Lawmakers*, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1974); Pippa Norris & Joni Lowenduski, *Political Recruitment – Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament*, (Cambridge, Cambridge U. P., 1995)

4 Heinrich Best & Maurizio Cotta, eds., *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe, 1848-2000. Legislative Recruitment and Careers in Eleven European Countries*, (Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

5 E.E. Schattschneider, *Party Government*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1942), 100.

6 Heinrich Best & Maurizio Cotta, *ibidem*, 11

Above were stated some of the most important arguments of those who study legislative recruitment as an independent variable for other phenomena. Subsequently it can be asked: what are the determinants of legislative recruitment (recruitment as dependent variable)? The literature emphasizes frequently four sets of factors: the legal provisions⁷, the electoral system, the party system and last but not least, the territorial organization of the state.

In the USA, Germany, Finland or Norway the legislative recruitment process is officially regulated – it must be inclusive, relatively decentralized and based on voting rather than appointment⁸. Next, the party system is considered influential for legislative recruitment because the effective numbers of parties, their size, age or ideologies⁹ are believed to affect the strategies of recruitment. For example, one could think that small/ young parties are more decentralized than large ones, or that 'extremist' parties are more "authoritarian" - leader-oriented in their selection methods. The territorial organization of the state is yet another factor taken into account when controlling for the inputs of legislative recruitment. It has been argued that federalism is related to decentralized candidate selection¹⁰.

The fourth variable mentioned regards the effects of electoral systems on legislative recruitment and it is in this direction that the present paper will focus its analysis. The assumptions generally made on this relationship acknowledge the existence of the influence but there is no agreement either on the level of its significance or on the means through which it is exerted. To make clearer the last part: some consider PR/ list systems to favor

7 Pippa Norris, 1997, 2.

8 Lars Bille, 'Democratizing a Democratic Procedure: Myth or Reality? Candidate Selection in Western European Parties, 1960-1990' in *Party Politics*, 7, no. 3, (2001): 369.

9 Krister Lundell, 'Determinants of Candidate Selection. The Degree of Centralization in Comparative Perspective', in *Party Politics*, 10, no. 1, (2004): 32-33.

10 Leon Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, (New Brunswick: Praeger, 1980), 31; Michael Gallagher & Michael Marsh, eds., *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics*, (London: Sage Publications, 1988).

centralization of recruitment (damaging the intra-party democracy – nomination decided by small, national executives) as opposed to single member districts systems, where candidate selection supposedly tends to be decentralized¹¹. Other political scientists¹² deny the accuracy of the last argument, while believing that electoral systems influence only the kind of resources/ qualities, selectors are seeking. For example, in SMD's electoral systems it is very likely for parties to seek candidates with local notoriety or strong influence on the local communities.

Taking into account the above mentioned dimensions of scholarship, the aim of this paper is to compare the methods and outcomes of candidate selection of the Romanian parties for the 2008 parliamentary elections and to analyze the possible transformations in recruitment that occurred, or are likely to occur, in accordance with the change in electoral law. Besides looking if running in SMDs has produced the need for different kinds of candidates' assets, we will also attempt to assess if the move towards a candidate-oriented election has/will modify the locus of selection (decentralization), or the inclusiveness of selectorates.

Why would it be necessary or interesting to conduct an analysis on this particular topic? The answer is twofold. Firstly, the case is important because of its relative uniqueness. It is very rare for a consolidated democracy¹³ to make a shift from a PR formula to a majoritarian or mixed one: Romania is the only European post-communist case. All the other changes meant the replacement of SMD-s with mixed (Albania, Ukraine) or PR (Macedonia), or switching from mixed systems to full PR (Russia, Ukraine, Serbia,

11 Donald R. Matthews, 'Legislative Recruitment and Legislative Careers', in Gerhard Loewenberg, Samuel C. Patterson, Malcolm Jewell eds., *Handbook of Legislative Research*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985): 35-7; Moshe Czudnowski, 'Political Recruitment', in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science: Volume 2, Micropolitical Theory*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975): 221.

12 Michael Gallagher & Michael Marsh, o. c., 260.

13 As Romania has been considered since 1996, see: Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, 'Poland and Romania' in Larry J. Diamond & Leonardo Morlino, eds., *Assessing the Quality of Democracy*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2005): 217.

Bulgaria and Croatia).¹⁴ Secondly, the case deserves attention because of the fact that expectations invested in the electoral engineering (by scholars, laypersons and politicians alike) regarded directly the legislative recruitment. The change followed a longish debate about the necessity of reforming the electoral system so as to provoke a renewal of the political class. The abolition of PR was justified by the need to promote new politicians, create stronger ties between the constituencies and their representatives, and by the need to have the possibility of sanctioning compromised politicians, who perennially managed to survive by securing safe places on party lists.¹⁵

The first section of the article deals with the patterns of legislative recruitment in Romania during the PR era, with a special focus on the elections held since 2000 (the second turnover of power). The second part of the section will present an overview of the new electoral system and its possible consequences. Section II will state the hypotheses of the inquiry and will describe the paper's research design: the construction of the dataset, the variables as well as the statistical methods employed for the analyses. Section III is reserved exclusively for discussion of the findings produced by the statistical analysis and for the investigation of the additional direct information collected via questionnaires sent to MPs. Finally, the conclusions will synthesize the results of the research and provide answers for the puzzle mentioned above.

14 Sarah Birch, 'Lessons from Eastern Europe: Electoral Reform Following the Collapse of Communism', paper prepared at the conference on 'Electoral Reform in Canada: Getting Past Debates about Electoral Systems', Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada, 10-12 May, 2005, available at: http://www.mta.ca/faculty/arts/canadian_studies/archives/birch.pdf

15 The study 'Political culture in Romania' (made in October-November 2008 by the Soros Foundation Romania) showed that people hoped the change in electoral system would bring: "...the possibility for the party leaders to impose unprepared candidates will be eliminated or at least decreased, the proportion of the candidates that come from the region for which they candidate will increase, the political class will be changed...MPs will be compelled to a greater extent to keep in touch with those who voted for them." A summary of all findings is available at: http://www.soros.ro/en/comunicate_detaliu.php?comunicat=79

1.1. Patterns of Legislative Recruitment in Romania during the PR electoral system

One of the criticisms commonly made towards PR by electoral system scholars was that it makes parties 'strong' at the expense of individual politicians, who do not need to develop strong reputations, but only the right connections in the party, in order to get on the list¹⁶. This results in obscurity of the legislators or very weak ties between MPs and their constituencies. The very same argument was relentlessly repeated in the Romanian context, where the electorate voted only on closed lists, without having the possibility of expressing preferences. If someone sympathized with the party as a whole, or only with some candidates, he/she was obliged to endorse the entire list even if it only included people imposed from the centre or absolute no-names. In the following lines, we will briefly describe how the process of composing the list and establishing the order of the names usually occurred for the main parties in the PR era, with a special focus on what has happened since 2000, when the party system started to stabilize itself. The analysis will consider three dimensions: the level of decentralization (centre vs. local vs. corporate), the mechanisms deployed by the selectorate (voting vs. appointment), and (where information are accessible) the criteria for selection. The description is based on comparisons between the formal regulations present in party statutes and "de facto" selection procedures as perceived by the literature or the actors involved.

The indicators for judging the decentralization of parties' legislative recruitment were borrowed from the above cited article of Krister Lundell, who has derived - from analysis of formal statutes of Western parties and previous scholarly work - a hierarchy of selection methods going from the most decentralized to the most centralized, as follows:

16 Matthew Soberg Shugart, 'Extreme Electoral Systems and the Appeal of the Mixed Member Alternative' in Matthew S. Shugart & Martin P. Wattenberg, eds., *Mixed Member Electoral Systems - The Best of Both Worlds?*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 2003): 26.

1. Selection at local party meetings, by local selection committees or by primaries open for all party members
2. Selection at the district level by a selection committee, by the executive district organ or at a convention (congress, conference) by delegates from the local parties
3. The same as 1 or 2 but regional or national organs exercise influence over the selection process, e.g. add names to the lists or have veto power. The decision, however, is taken at the district level. Formal approval by regional or national organs without actual involvement in the process belongs to the second category
4. The same as 5, but local, district or regional organs exercise influence over the selection process, e.g. party members, the local parties or committees at the constituency or the regional level propose candidates. The decision, however, is taken at the national level
5. Selection by the party leader, by the national executive organ, by a national selection committee, or by primaries at the national level"¹⁷

Table 1. The Romanian Parliamentary Elections 2000-2008

Parties	2000 (t=65.31% ***)		2004 (t=58.93%)		2008 (t=39.26%)	
	votes	seats	votes	seats	votes	seats
Social Democratic Party *	36.85%	210	36.9%	159	33.62%	158
Humanist/Conservative Party *		10		30		5
National Liberal Party **	7.18%	43	31.48%	93	18.65%	93
Democratic (Liberal) Party **	7.35%	44		68	32.96%	166
Greater Romania Party	20.24%	121	13.32%	69	3.36%	0
UDMR	6.85%	39	6.23%	32	6.28%	31

¹⁷ Krister Lundell, 2004, 31.

* PSD and Humanists run together in all the elections, so separate percentages of vote are not available

** NLP and PD run together in 2004 as 'Justice and Truth', their percentages being thus aggregated

*** t = Voter Turnout

According to the above criteria, the most decentralized party is The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR). Their lists were composed and voted on by the local branches and the ordinary members had the opportunity to participate (level 1 in Lundell's scale). The National Council of the Alliance could make some recommendations, but the last word with regard to the selection decisions belonged to the territorial organizations/branches.¹⁸ The decentralization of candidate recruitment facilitates the smooth functioning of an Alliance marked by its internal pluralism: several political orientations, from liberal to social democratic have their own factions within the union. There are also criticisms addressed to this model of recruitment, the most important of which regard the degree of professionalism of selected candidates, the costs implied, the easy distortion of results and the "electioneering fatigue" of candidates and staffs¹⁹. It should be added that the majority of the MP's of the Alliance have quite a few number of mandates, so it seemed there was little room for new-comers.

The Social Democratic Party (PSD) organized internal elections for nominations, open to all members, only in 2004. Nevertheless, their results were not enforced because of the electoral alliance with the Humanist Party (later renamed, Conservative). Although the 2005 new party statute officially imposed them, under the label "preliminary elections" to be held at the district level (articles 3 and 39), there is no evidence of the provision being applied. The party statute also limited to a proportion of maximum 1/3 the number of MP candidates in a constituency that can be nominated by the national leadership (article 99). Having

18 Ionuț Ciobanu, 'Selectoratul partidelor politice romanesti' [The Selectorates of Romanian Political Parties], *Sfera Politicii*, no. 126-127, (2007): 66

19 For more details see the comments of UDMR's vice-president, Peter Kovacs available at: <http://kovacspeter.worPDress.com/2008/01/17/eficacitate-vs-populism-consideratii-privind-institutia-alegerilor-interne/>

said this, it is realistic to believe that party county organizations have an important say in the nomination decisions (even if we only consider the number of "local barons" in the party), which does not mean that the National Executive Committee does not play a significant role. The empirical research done by Laurențiu Ștefan was the first to emphasize this balance between national and local leaders of the PSD in the process of candidate selection, the author mentioning that despite "rather numerous parachutists" who needed the backing of central leadership, the proportion of 2/3 of candidatures decided at local level seemed to be a reality²⁰. Therefore, on Lundell's scale of decentralization the social democrats would be somewhere closer to '3' than to '4' (levels). The classical recruitment from the party ranks was doubled by a large share of outsiders²¹: businessmen, trade union leaders, but also public servants or (former) managers of state owned-companies (many of them members of second or third layers of the former Communist Nomenklatura).

The Democrat Party (named nowadays Democrat-Liberal after its merger with a faction from the Liberal Party) had fixed in its statute²² a mixed procedure: drawing up and voting²³ the lists of candidates at the county level, but also nominations made directly by the National Permanent Bureau (art. 148, 3-8 of the statute). In the case of deadlock between the two levels, the final decision would be taken by another national body: the National Coordination Council. Candidacy requires at least 3 years of party membership and 2 years of active involvement certified by the Secretariat for Human Resources, Militants and Career Management (art 148.1)

Going beyond the formal regulations, it was argued that the "incidence of national party leadership intervention is the lowest

20 Laurențiu Ștefan, *Patterns of Political Elite Recruitment in Post-Communist Romania*, (Bucharest: Ziu Publishing House, 2004): 185.

21 Laurențiu Ștefan, (2004): 242.

22 The paragraph discussing the selection and nomination of candidates for Parliament is identical in both the older statute of the PD and the new one of the DLP.

23 This procedure is probably dead letter, since it was never certified by an official account neither in the newspapers nor in the specialized literature.

after UDMR.”²⁴ A strong importance was given in the party’s legislative recruitment process to the position in the party hierarchy and to political experience at the local level. The rate of legislative incumbency was quite high, veteran MPs actually controlling the party until the 2001 change in leadership (when P. Roman was replaced by the future mayor of Bucharest and current President, T. Băsescu). A ‘3’ on Lundell’s scale would be appropriate.

The National Liberal Party had a recruitment process based mainly on nomination. The lists were the result of negotiations between the Territorial Permanent Delegation, the (National) Permanent Delegation and the Central Political Bureau (art. 52 and 68 of the statute). Ordinary members were not involved. Candidacy implies at least 2 years of party membership, but the Permanent Delegation can approve derogations (art. 87).

The analysis conducted by Laurențiu Ștefan pointed to a preeminent role in PNL candidate selection of the central leadership, the author assessing the autonomy of ‘local structures’ as being rather weak²⁵. However, since the first years of the new millennium, when Ștefan did his research, there has been an important mutation in the internal power division of the PNL²⁶. This concerns especially the great importance acquired by certain county branches of the party through powerful local leaders, the best examples being the Iași organization (Relu Fenechiu), Gorj (Dan Ilie Morega) or Constanța (Puiu Hasotti). The fact that this logic of decentralization affected the recruitment is demonstrated by the number of new MPs promoted by the above mentioned leaders, who had a fulminating ascension - some of them were even appointed ministers, in the last 4 years. In June 2008, the president of the party, (and Romania’s Prime-Minister at the time) Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu announced internal elections for the nomination of candidates to the November elections. This initiative was re-framed several times

24 Laurențiu Ștefan, (2004): 184.

25 Laurențiu Ștefan, (2004): 186.

26 The transformation of the PNL was only covered by the media, no scholarly work being done in this direction.

before being completely abandoned.²⁷ Given all the above different trends, it is quite hard and maybe sort of meaningless to aggregate and simply say, following Lundell's scale that the Liberals exhibit a medium centralized recruitment pattern.

On the contrary, the Greater Romania Party and the Conservative Party (formerly Humanist Party), two small parties continuously present in Parliament (in the analyzed period, 2000-2008) can be straightforwardly categorized as having a recruitment highly-centralized and leader-dominated²⁸ – values of 5 on Lundell's continuum (articles 75 and 76 of the Conservatives' statute). Besides large amounts of politicians adopted from other parties, they relied also on former Communist activists and officers of the 'Securitate', political police.²⁹

It is also important to take into account the other dimension of decentralization that is emphasized by the literature, besides the territorial one. Corporate decentralization refers to functional representation of specific groups (women, youth, trade unions etc.) through specific strategies of selection like the "reserved place mechanism" (quotas) or the "sectarian district" (selectorates and candidates come from the same sector or social

27 It is interesting that the advice for running the preliminary elections was given by the same famous Israeli political consultant, Tal Sillberstein, who promoted their introduction them in the PSD 4 years earlier. For more details see: http://www.cotidianul.ro/alegeri_interne_in_pnl_marca_silberstein-50657.html and <http://www.gandul.info/politica/alegerile-interne-din-pnl-varianta-restransa.html?3928;2763141>

28 Laurențiu Ștefan, (2004): 185-6.

29 Raluca Grosescu, 'Traiectorii de conversie politica a nomenclaturii din Romania. Spre o taxonomie a partidelor create de fostele elite comuniste' [Political Conversion Trajectories of the Romanian Nomenclatura. Towards a Taxonomy of the Political Parties created by the former Communist Elites] in *** Elite comuniste inainte si dupa 1989, [Communist Elites Before and After 1989], the Yearbook of the Institute for the Investigation of the Communist Crimes in Romania, vol. II, (Iasi: Polirom, 2007): 203-5. See also: Marius Oprea, Mostenitorii Securitatii [The Inheritors of the Securitate], (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004); and the 'Lists of Stained / Compromised Parliamentarians', initiated by several NGOs' under the initiative, 'Coalition for a Clean Parliament', available at <http://www.catavencu.ro/lista.html>.

group)³⁰. None of the Romanian parties applied this kind of decentralization, although there were some initiatives inside the PSD about implementing specific quotas of representation for women and youth party organizations.³¹

Next, we will mention two other common patterns of selection and nomination that were emphasized to cut across partisan differences. First, an important observation regards the level of center domination, revealed by the growing number of 'parachutists' – politicians with national careers that were imposed on the parties' district lists, disregarding the will and potential of members in local branches: "Gradually, more and more constituencies are represented by politicians with... residence in Bucharest. Parliamentary activities become more and more a matter within the practical reaches of the central elite of the parties and less accessible to the genuine representatives of the constituencies."³² Second, another important factor in the legislative recruitment of new-comers was their financial background³³. Almost all parties chose to reward businessmen that contributed to electoral campaigns' costs with seats in Parliament. Both factors will be taken into account later in the analysis.

As a final remark of this part we have to say that none of the Romanian parties modified the articles of their official statutes regarding selection of candidates for Parliament, after the change in electoral system. This implies that informal practices are much more important and that is why an empirical inquiry is needed. Nevertheless, statutes cannot be altogether neglected since they set at least the general desiderata for recruitment, not to mention that they can be reactivated and used in intra-party struggles. On

30 Gideon Rahat & Reuven Y. Hazan, 'Candidate Selection Methods – An Analytical Framework' in *Party Politics*, 7, no. 3, (2001): 304.

31 In July 2004 the 'Ovidiu Șincai Institute' affiliated to the PSD proposed the project of preliminary elections, through which 25% of the candidates would have been chosen by the women organization, respectively another quarter by the youth organizations. For more details see: http://www.fisd.ro/PDF/mater_noi/Raport%20alegeri%20interne.pdf

32 Laurențiu Ștefan, (2004): 236.

33 As it results from the interviews I (Ionut Ciobanu) conducted with MPs.

the other hand, the fact that the "guidelines and rules in official party regulations tend to have de jure not de facto power"³⁴ points to the fact that the Romanian parties (with the exception of UDMR) are more inclined towards a patronage-oriented recruitment than to a 'bureaucratized' process of selection, to use the ideal types proposed by Pippa Norris.

1.2 The new electoral system and its alleged consequences

Several alternative variants of electoral system were debated by the Parliament for many months, varying from the German MMP, proposed by an NGO (Pro-Democracy Association) to the French run-off system. In addition to this institutional debate, the President called for a referendum in November 2007 whereby the people were asked if they want a two round-majoritarian system. Although more than 80% agreed, the referendum was invalidated by the participation of only 26% of the voters³⁵. A compromise was finally reached on the variant proposed by the Liberal minority government and Pro-Democracy Association. The new electoral law adopted by the Romanian parliament on March 4th 2008 brought to an end the Proportional Representation system used for 5 electoral cycles since 1990. There are 43 constituencies (for the 41 counties, Bucharest and Diaspora) with Single Member Districts for each seat in Parliament (330 deputies and 135 senators). The citizens have two votes (one per chamber); the mandates are attributed in three stages:

1. The candidates with a share of votes of at least 50% + 1 win directly a seat in the new legislative. The parties that did not manage to surpass the national threshold (5% of the total number of votes) can enter via the alternative threshold (6 districts won in the Chambers of Deputies + 3 in the Senate). Independent candidates can make it into parliament only in this stage – they are excluded from redistributions.

34 Pippa Norris, 'Legislative Recruitment' in Lawrence Leduc, Richard G. Niemi, Pippa Norris, eds., *Comparing Democracies, Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*, (London: Sage Pub., 1996): 203.

35 The 2000 referendum law specifies the validation threshold at 50% + 1 of the persons entitled to vote.

2. All the votes won by the candidates of a party in a constituency are added and the number is divided by the electoral coefficient (ratio between the total votes cast in that constituency and the number of seats allocated for that constituency). In this way is computed the number of seats that each party (above the national thresholds) is entitled to receive. After subtracting the number of seats won directly by the candidates of that party, the remaining mandates are given to those candidates of the party that received the largest share of votes. If a party wins more mandates than it is proportionally entitled to, the seats are kept and the size of the Parliament increases.³⁶

3. If there are still mandates to be allocated, they are redistributed according to the national coefficients of parties to the best situated candidates of those parties, in the same constituency.

The new electoral system proposed a combination in which although running in SMDs, candidates are - if they do not get absolute majority - still dependent on the performance of their party colleagues in the other SMDs of the county, and subsequently their chances are increased/ decreased by the party's national performance. Another important feature of the new electoral formula is that it keeps a low level of accountability - voters can be only partially effective in sanctioning candidates, by not voting for them, because candidates can win the seat from the second or third place (after redistributions). Thus, the system favors strategic choice of SMDs.

The change from voting a party list to voting a person made the parties face many dilemmas in what regards the selection of candidates. The first dilemma would regard the question where to find the candidates (excluding from the discussion the incumbents)? An option given the personalization of the vote was to look outside the party and invite local notables to run that enjoyed high popularity and/or influence: from physicians to businessmen or singers. The opposite option was to appoint local,

36 This is what actually happened: 4 more seats were allocated in the Chamber of Deputies, and 2 in the Senate.

loyal “party soldiers”³⁷ (politicians holding local offices, or simply activists) so as to reward them and at the same time retain a strong party discipline within the parliamentary group, a discipline that could be endangered if too many former apolitical figures were co-opted.

Table 2. Incumbency rates 2008

	PNL	PDL	PSD	UDMR
MPs elected in 2004	93	68	159	32
MPs running again in 2008	70	74*	123	17
Re-elected	32	40	71	16
Percentage of re-election	45.71	54.05%	57.72%	94%

*The difference appears from the merger with the PNL faction

** We did not take into account the candidates that had previous mandates in the Parliament but were not present in 2004-8

A second dilemma refers to the decision of delegating the costs of campaigning: since the PR unique party campaign was history and each candidate had to have a separate campaign with prints, clips, blogs or other personalized advertising materials, the parties could choose to put the expenses on the accounts of those running: either by nominating affluent candidates or requiring candidates themselves to find sources of financing. But this move could, in turn, produce again too much independence, and weaken the party control over its MPs.

Next, for the very fact that the new electoral system is a middle-of-the-road solution between a constituency-oriented candidacy and the desire of the parties to keep control over the candidates, it was quite unclear to whom the new MPs would be responsive. On the one hand, all the MPs face the problem of identification with a particular constituency, which triggers the ‘delegate’ logic

37 Ioan Mircea Paşcu, ‘Uninominalul’, Q Magazine (August, 31st 2008), available at: <http://www.qmagazine.ro/articole/595/Uninominalul.html>

of representation³⁸. On the other, the MPs could be perceived as “trustees”, since for many the locus of loyalty is represented by the party selectorates - especially in the cases where the candidates were allocated safe seats or where they got their places due to redistributions based on party performance. A third, alternative explanation makes the MPs responsive neither to the citizens in their constituency nor to the parties, but to the interests of those wealthy persons that sponsored their campaigns.

2.1 Hypotheses

There are two sets of hypotheses we tested, corresponding to the two different research strategies adopted (see the explanations below).

A

H. 1: Given the characteristics of the new electoral system, the more political experience at the local/county level, the more likely the newcomer is to be elected.

H. 2: The replacement of the PR system should have a negative effect on women’s chances to be elected

H. 3: Running in a SMD part of a county governed by a politician from his/ her party should significantly increase the odds of a newcomer being elected.

H. 4: The more important the party office occupied by the first-time candidate, the larger his/her chances of winning the seat.

B

H. 1: Under the new electoral system, a significant number of candidates are likely to choose or need to finance their campaign themselves.

H. 2: There should be variation of selection methods within parties, based on different degrees of autonomy that certain organizations enjoy, due to previous electoral performances or power of county leaders.

38 J. Mansbridge, “Rethinking Representation”, *American Political Science Review*, no. 97, (2003): 515–528.

Research strategies

Before describing the research strategies it is necessary to say that the study was uniquely focused on first-time elected MPs, because the incumbents (in Romanian parties as in many other European parties) have generally the possibility of running again without passing a new selection process.

The first strategy meant a quantitative analysis of the electoral results (which had the determinants of recruitment as independent variables) because we believed that by looking at the elected candidates we will have a valuable proxy measurement of the different recruitment processes. We argue this by showing that 30.46% (79 persons) of the MPs in our sample got their seats after being on the 2nd, 3rd or 4th place – thus the sample contains not only the novices with the perceived greatest chance of winning but also the more marginal figures produced by different recruitment strategies. Furthermore, this kind of analysis is valuable not only with respect to the assessment of the assets that parties took into account when nominating candidates, but also for the feedback given by the electorate, which can in turn provoke subsequent changes in the selection practices.

Second, in order to have direct information about the recruitment, we also sent questionnaires to all newly elected MPs. We sought to obtain data about selectorates, campaign financing, perceived decentralization and inclusiveness in the candidate's party, but also to re-test some of the findings of the previous statistical analysis. The rate of response was a little bit more than 10%, in line with other research on elites, thus making the generalization of findings partially limited.

2.2 Variables

Our dataset consists of all MPs elected for the first time on November 30th 2008*, which resulted in a sample size of N=243 (out of 471)³⁹. The data were taken from the official websites of

39 We did not include in our database the 18 deputies of the national minorities because their places are guaranteed by the electoral law, irrespective of the

the parties and their local branches, from websites of candidates, but also from newspapers and campaign blogs. For the variable 'institutional experience' the information provided by candidates or by news regarding them, was verified on the official websites of those institutions. The availability of information differed from party to party, and also varied regionally, and with the degree of development of local media. Despite these nuances, we have to say that generally the proportion of missing data is very low: we found no data on the party careers of 8 MPs and on the profession of 2.

Regarding the questionnaires, they were sent to all MPs in the sample, on their official electronic mail addresses from the Parliament as well as on many of their private accounts. We received 26 responses - at little bit more than 10% (the largest percentage being 13% for PNL), but, at least the number of questionnaires is almost perfectly proportional with the shares of new-comers corresponding to each party. There is no regional bias concerning the provenience of respondents (they come from 21 counties, from all the regions in Romania, only 4 pairs of respondents having the same residence). Only 1 of the 14 UDMR MPs in our sample responded, despite the fact that we sent them questionnaires in both Hungarian and Romanian. Variables included in the analysis:

Dependent variable:

1. How the new (first time) MP got elected: 'being in first place' (winning the majority or plurality of votes) versus 'not winning' - MP's which got the seat after redistribution, coming from the 2nd, 3rd or even 4th place. The variable measures the degree of success of the candidate and, indirectly, the success of parties' recruitment strategies.

Independent Variables:

number of votes received, and they do not need to compete with other candidates. We did include the 4 of the MPs elected for the first time by the Romanians in Diaspora. The possibility of having in parliament representatives of those living abroad was introduced by the new electoral law.

1. Experience in political institutions – is generally considered to be an important asset for candidates, in Western European settings⁴⁰ and for Romanian parties as well⁴¹. The corresponding hypothesis tests for a preeminence of local political experience - which implies that being mayor of a small town should have been more important than having an important function in a governmental agency. In other words, local notability and local political influence ought to represent strong assets for a successful recruitment. It was coded: 0 = no experience/ 1= local council, / 2=mayor /3= decentralized, local governmental agencies/ 4= county council,/ 5= national political institutions/ 6 = experience at both local and national levels/ 7 = Member of the European Parliament

2. Party Career – Next to political experience, a position in the party's (different levels of) leadership is one of the most salient determinants of recruitment as results from the ample comparative study edited by Heinrich Best and Maurizio Cotta: 'Generally more than 30% of MPs (up to around 80% in some countries) can be seen to have held a leading party position at a local or national level before their first election to Parliament.'⁴² The variable was coded as follows: 0 = no office/ 1= member of the party's local branch leadership/ 2 = member of party's county branch leadership / 3= office in the national organs of the party.

3. Influence of the County Leader: because many Romanian political scientists and journalists have signaled the great power enjoyed by the heads of county (districts) councils- many of them labeled as 'local barons', we decided to introduce a dummy variable to control for the effects of running in a constituency part of the county governed by a politician coming from the same party or from a rival one. The presidents of county councils distribute the funds for all the city halls and issue development plans that shape the economy of the entire county. Many of them managed to keep the office for several terms, thus creating strong clientelistic networks. The decision for their impeachment

40 Michael Gallagher & Michael Marsh, eds., (1988): 248.

41 Laurențiu Ștefan, (2004): 151-156.

42 Heinrich Best & Maurizio Cotta, eds., (2000): 505.

is almost impossible to obtain. From June 2008 they are elected in a FPTP contest, which is supposed to give them the legitimacy they lacked until now – they were elected by the other councilors.

Control variables:

Profession – having the categories: 'professional politician', 'civil servant', 'trade union leader', 'engineer'⁴³, businessman, 'media and showbiz' and 'other'.

Age - We recoded it as 'age group' comprising three categories: 1st: 25-40, 2nd: 41-56 and 3rd: 57-72.

Gender – the sample included 27 women and 216 men.

2.3 Methods

A. First, the Chi Squares Test of Independence was used – mainly because the dataset includes only categorical data (except the 'age' variable). In this manner we were able to tell if the distributions of 'winners' and 'lucky redistributed' were related or not with the above mentioned independent variables. We believed our sample is large enough (N=243) to use the Chi Squares Test of Independence and avoid Type II errors. We thought the cells' size would be appropriate, and thus the analysis would not run into small frequencies problems (cells that violate the rule of minimum 5 observations expected for each cell)⁴⁴. Since the chi squares show only if the hypothesis of independence between the two variables is rejected, but not the direction of the association, or how strong this is, we also reported and analyzed the values of Cramer's V and Phi for each statistically significant relationship.

43 The Romanian Communists' fetish for the engineering industry, resulted in the largest number per capita of engineers in the whole world. The engineers 'dominated' Romanian politics even after 1989! For this see also, Irina Culic, 'Social Actors in a Political Game. The Romanian Political Elite and Democratization, 1989-2000', The Romanian Journal of Political Science, no. 1 (2005).

44 We made this assumption by using the rule of dividing the number of the population in my sample to the number obtained by multiplying the number of levels/categories of the dependent and independent variables for each case. The results were for each case well above five - as the rule suggested.

B. After the chi squares tests we decided to apply also Logistic Regression⁴⁵ inferential statistics, in order to assess better how much the variables proposed influence the odds of a recruited candidate being elected. The results confirmed the most important findings of the chi squares tests.

C. Because the information we got from the questionnaires came from a small number of cases it was analyzed only through descriptive statistics.

3.1 Candidates' assets or party support?

The distribution of new-comers and their degrees of electoral success within parties is relevant in making the whole picture clearer. Table 3 below confirms the expectations one could have

Table 3. Party Identity of newcomers and electoral results

N=243	National Liberal Party	Liberal-Democratic Party	Social Democratic Party	Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania	Totals
Winning the 1st place	20	81	53	10	164 (69.54%)
Being on the 2nd, 3rd or 4th position	32	25	18	4	79 (30.46%)
Total	52	106	71	14	
% newcomers in the parliamentary group	55.9%	64.6%	44.9%	45.1%	

after the recruitment processes and electoral campaigns. Firstly, one half of the newcomers are members of the Liberal Democratic Party, the presidential party, and a party of mayors/local notables which had an electoral boom (mainly because of the President's

45 Although some political scientists would deem 243 cases too few for a regression, we considered the number appropriate since the research is focused on elites.

popularity and his anti-corrupt system discourse). The second largest percentage belongs to PNL (the minority-governing party), which recruited recently a significant number of persons with high visibility, not involved before in politics⁴⁶.

Experience in political institutions

Despite the fact that the differences on this feature between winning MPs and lucky MPs proved not to be statistically significant, the variable institutional experience remains important for explaining the sociological characteristics of the new-comers. Accordingly, the hypothesis regarding the importance of local political experience was validated since 65.1% of the first time elected MP's hold experience in local/county administration, as opposed to 27.2 %, who have no political experience and the remainder, 7.7%, who have participated mainly in national politics.

Laurențiu Ștefan considers experience in public institutions to be a sign of parties giving their members the chance of apprenticeship before recruiting them as MP candidates. We would rather follow the interpretation given by another political scientist, Cristian Preda, who considers the fact that the same people are repeatedly running for local councils, district councils, city halls and parliament to be a proof of parties' paucity in human resources.⁴⁷ On the other hand, the local politics expertise can also be interpreted as favoring the "delegate" logic of representation, since it means that the MPs have significant knowledge about the problems of the communities they represent.

Party Career

46 They are well-know actors like Mircea Diaconu and Florin Calinescu, singers (Mihai Pocorschi, Dida Dragan, Nicolae Furdui-Iancu) or journalists (Cristian Topescu).

47 Argument from a public debate quoted by Razvan Braileanu, 'Nu trageți in pianist, votati-!!' ('Don't shoot the pianist, vote for him!') Revista 22, no. 968, (September 2008).

The results of the chi square test for party career showed a level of significance of $p=.17$ at a $df=3$, having only one cell which violated the small frequencies rule⁴⁸. Because of these indicators we can say that generally the relationship remained statistically insignificant. The absence of statistically high significant differences between the above mentioned categories of MP's can be partially explained by the fact that more than 2/3 of them (75.8%) are members of the local and county leadership of the party branches where they run for a constituency. Moreover, it could be argued that there is a preeminence of the county level of the party over the others in the selection and promotion of new candidates: 54% of the new MPs come only from the ranks of parties' county leaderships.

Influence of the County Leader

For the 'county leader's influence' variable we had to exclude the results registered for Bucharest (because the president of the General Council of the Municipality does not enjoy even by far the same influence of a County Council president) and for the Diaspora (where parties have no local branches, and there are no county leaders). All the cells had at least 5 observations and displayed a Pearson chi squares of 51^{***} , $df=1$.⁴⁹ The result (see Table 4) seems actually very convincing of the importance of this variable since only 5 candidates enjoying the support of the president of the county council did not manage to win a plurality/majority. The Cramer's V and Phi indicated both a level of strength for this relationship of .480 at *** significance, which points to a rather moderate correlation of the relationship.

Profession

Although there were no significant differences between the winners and the "lucky redistributed" new MPs, it is worth mentioning some of the frequencies – they partially confirm the

48 The Phi and Cramer's V values show a very weak correlation, .145 at a dubious level of significance, $p=.174$

49 The likelihood ratio was 59.48, significant at $P<.001$, while the Fisher exact test indicated the same highly relevance in terms of statistical significance

Table 4. Effects of county leader support on the place obtained in the college

N=222, all being valid cases.	Running against the 'system'	Having the support of the 'county leader'	Total
Winning the 1st place	Observed= 64 Expected=88.5	O= 86 E= 61.5	140
Being on the 2nd, 3rd or 4th position	O= 67 E= 42.5	O= 5 E= 29.5	72

older recruitment patterns. So, the second largest percentage is represented by businessmen– 19.1% - a fact which comes to corroborate our hypothesis of the importance of self-financing the campaign. Almost 14% are professional politicians, 11% engineers and almost 9% are civil servants. The other categories mentioned in the literature (trade union leaders, media and showbiz) are included too, but with shares smaller than 3%. Nevertheless, the surprise comes from liberal professions (most of them lawyers and physicians) which had the largest percentage, 39.1%.

Age

The chi square test failed to reject the null hypothesis: $p=.48$ at $df=2$. We have to say that, as expected, the new-comers are generally younger than their more experienced colleagues: the mean being 45.49 years (the average age taking into account all Parliamentarians is 48.5⁵⁰).

Gender

There were almost perfectly identical distributions of males and females, since $p=.92$, $df=1$. The female newcomers represent almost 2/3 of the total number of women MP elected: 27 out of

50 Dan Arsenie, 'Parlamentarul Tipic: 48 de ani, inginer sau jurist' [The typical MP: 48, engineer or jurist] in Evenimentul Zilei, (December 5th 2008)

42⁵¹. It seems the change in electoral system did affect slightly the chances of women to be recruited and elected – there were 50 women MPs elected in 2004, and 49 in 2000. This finding validates the gender-related hypothesis and corroborates the assumptions for which the literature considers disadvantageous for women to run in SMDs as opposed to PR systems.⁵² More research should be done to see if also the number of women candidates was lower under the new electoral system.

3.2 The odds of being a successful newcomer

The analysis emphasized the great relevance of the 'county president influence' variable: the Exponential B of this variable was 17.82. Thus it can be said that if a candidate runs in a SMD part of a county governed by a baron from his/her party, then he/she is approximately 17 times more likely to win than otherwise (see table 5 below). Nevertheless there are a number of possible objections that can be addressed to this finding. Firstly, it can be argued that not the presence of a county council president from the same party as the candidate is "a ticket to success". Those officials have been recently elected by the same population of the county that votes for the MPs. Such correlation, if valid, would only mean that preferences of the electorate have not changed since the local elections. Therefore, the correlation could be considered spurious.

We agree partially with the above contention but only for those counties where the president of the county council has not cumulated several mandates and is not acknowledged as a 'local baron' using his clientelistic networks to mobilize voters, either for him or for his party. At least 11 (25%) of the actual presidents of county councils were identified as 'local barons' by the inquiries mainly based on policy and local media monitoring, of several NGOs, under the initiative, 'Clean Government

51 There were in each legislative 2 women elected as deputies representing minorities – they were excluded from the counting

52 Steven Saxonberg, 'Women in East European Parliaments', *Journal of Democracy*, 11, no: 2, (April 2000): 147-148; Pippa Norris, 'Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems', *International Political Science Review*, 18, no. 3, (July 1997): 306-309.

Coalition'. Those politicians were involved in corruption acts (falsified auctions, public contracts for the clients' firms etc.) and are now serving for the second or third mandate⁵³.

A second objection refers to the case in which more local barons can be identified in the same county – besides the presidents of county councils there are also mayors who have built in several mandates, similar, though smaller power networks based on the same recipe of corruption and clientelism. Indeed, this is a very complex situation which cannot be covered without an in depth knowledge of local affairs. What can be said is that because of the de facto "power vertical"⁵⁴ (presidents of county councils distributing funds and issuing development plans that affect all city halls), the presidents of county councils have the capacity to coerce mayors, and thus their influence is greater. Nevertheless, the importance of mayors is crucial since the electoral districts are, in the majority of cases, designed so as to coincide with towns or communes, and especially in poorer and rural areas this gives mayors even more incentives to mobilize the electorate in one direction or another. Thus, it is not surprising that with the new electoral system dozens of incumbent mayors have been elected as MPs (observation which applies best to the PDL). We tried to find an answer to the antinomy of influences (presidents of counties vs. mayors) by putting in the questionnaire an item related to the support given to the candidate by the party officials.

To continue, it is important to emphasize that the logistic regression confirmed the value of the variable institutional experience, recoded here so as to contain 4 categories ('experience at local level', 'no experience', 'experience in national political institutions' and 'experience at both, national and local levels'). The significance acquired was $p=.08$, while the Exponential B was 1.56.

53 See further information at www.romaniacurata.ro

54 To paraphrase the concept associated with Vladimir Putin's strengthening of the central power vis-à-vis the leaders of the regions – see Richard Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's choice*, (London: Routledge, 2004): 159.

Table 5. Effects of institutional experience, party career and county leader support

Variables	B(Estimate)	Standard Error	Exponential B	Significance	Wald Test	% correctly estimated: 71.5
Institutional Experience	.44	.26	1.56	.08	2.97	Pseudo R Square: 0.348
Party Career	.12	.24	1.13	.60	.27	-
Influence of the County Leader	2.88	.49	17.82	***	33.43	2Loglikelihood: 208.96 Chi Squares: 61.57*** df=3
Constant	-.653	.38	0.52	.08	2.90	Hosmer and Lemeshow Test: 3.23, df=6, P=.779

N=243, df=1

3.4 What do MP's think about recruitment?

Selectorates and intra-party variations of selection procedures

90% of all the respondents to the questionnaires say that they were nominated as candidates in the county organization of the party. But there are important nuances about selectorates at this level.

With only one exception all the respondents from the PSD have been nominated by the county leadership of the party: the executive bureau – this explains probably why the selection is not perceived as very inclusive. None of the PSD respondents mentioned anything about their nomination being validated through vote in the organization.

In contrast with the above described situation, a respondent from the PNL argues that her nomination has been established by voting (10 persons applied for candidature to the county's 5 SMDs) held in the county delegation of the party. The amount of votes received by the first 4 candidates allowed them to choose

the SMD in which to run, the 5th remaining with the last constituency. This is quite an important finding because it shows a variation of selection methods within the PNL, since it is the first and only evidence of legislative recruitment through voting.

In the same category of variation of selection procedures within parties we can put the information given by a PDL respondent who said that the nominations in his county were made after surveys over possible candidates' popularity had been conducted in each electoral district. This sort of polling seems to have been used also by some of the organizations from the PNL⁵⁵. Only 2 respondents (1 from PDL and the other from the PSD) say that they had been nominated by the local organizations of the party, which shows that decentralization is rarely applied fully – to the last tier.

Support from party officials

Because the previous statistical analysis (of the electoral results of the new comers) showed that running in a constituency part of a county governed by a person from the same party has an important positive effect on chances of being elected, we re-tested the assumption through question 6. The results confirmed partially the analysis, while suggesting another important factor – the support of mayors from the same party. Only 10% of all the respondents declared that they were not supported by officials from their party. 27% of all the respondents declared that they were supported by presidents of county councils.

Half of the PSD respondents have acknowledged the support coming from president of the county council while 3 others have pointed to the help given by mayors from the party. The situation is reversed in the case of PDL, where 80% of the respondents acknowledged the support given by local authorities that are party members. This is not counter-intuitive at all since PDL is mostly a party of mayors. For the PNL, the support from officials

55 Alexandra Ionaşcu, 'Les candidats aux élections parlementaires en Roumanie', CEVIPOL, available at:
http://dev.ulb.ac.be/cevipol/dossiers_fichiers/candidats.pdf

goes more or less in the same way as for the PDL (70% acknowledging support from mayors and local councilors). One factor explaining the situation would be the fact that the party has very few presidents of county councils.

Financing the campaign

The overall mean of self-financing of the campaigns was 74.35%. Only three respondents acknowledged that they did not contribute at all or very little to their campaign financing. The party that seems to have asked the most substantial contributions from its candidates is the PNL. Among the respondents from this party, 70% of them have covered entirely the costs of their campaign while the rest have contributed with percentages starting from 85%.

As regards the PSD, half of the respondents have covered 100% of their campaign finances while the others have contributed with 90%, 80%, 60% and respectively 50%. From the PDL we had the following answers: 1 full contribution, 3 almost nothing, 2 – 50% and other 2 with 75% and 80% (other two respondents did not answer this question).

This transfer of the financial burden on candidates can be explained partially by the fact that the general party campaigns from the PR era, conducted with unique political advertising materials for all the candidates present on the party list, have been now replaced by personalized campaigns. In line with this assumption, it was not surprising to find that 50% of the respondents have used the services of political communication advisers (the percentage being roughly the same within parties).

Decentralization and inclusiveness of recruitment

The MPs were asked to give their general perception about how decentralized and how democratic/inclusive the candidate selection process is in their party. We will not repeat all the categories of answer (the appendix contains the questionnaire), it suffices to say that the MPs had 5 options for each scale (1-being most inclusive/ decentralized).

We computed the scores for each party by averaging the responses given. The question about decentralization produced the following results: PDL = 1.55, PNL = 2, PSD= 2.25, UDMR=2

For inclusiveness the scores are: PSD = 1.87, PDL = 1.88, PNL = 2.42, UDMR=1

The scores should be taken with certain reservation, given the natural tendency of new successful MPs to project a positive light on the process that had, as one of the outcomes, their election.

The fact that the PNL exhibits quite a good score on decentralization confirms our expectation about the internal power mutation towards a greater importance of the county branches of the party. In addition to that, the relatively high score received for the second question – score which means low inclusiveness, points to the importance of local party leaders who dominate the organizations, not allowing for too much participation in the selection of candidates. Here we have an important outlier – mentioned above – the case of nomination through voting. Nevertheless, given all the other cases, it seems that the PNL is closer to the type of 'local patronage'⁵⁶ recruitment, as defined by Pippa Norris.

The scores confirmed the opinions that UDMR and PDL have the leading positions in what concerns decentralization of legislative recruitment among Romanian parties. On the other hand, it seems there are important influences of the centre in the selection made in the PSD, quite a few of the respondents classifying the process as being rather mixed. The graphs in the appendix should be read while keeping in mind that a lower value represents more decentralization/inclusiveness of recruitment.

Length of party membership

Seniority in the party is commonly perceived by the literature as one of the assets of potential candidates. That is why we included a question regarding the length of the membership in the party.

⁵⁶ Pippa Norris, (1996): 205.

All the respondents from the PNL claim to have more than 4 years of party membership. However, the average is much higher: 9 years. One third of the respondents from the PDL have less than 1 year of membership. This figure emphasizes the PDL campaign of recruiting candidates from outside the party, but can be also interpreted conversely as a result of the increased popularity of the party, attracting opportunists. Nevertheless, the average is 5.9 years of membership. The PSD respondents have the highest average of years of party membership, 12.25. The lowest reported membership was 7 years. The fact that generally most of the respondents had more than 5 years of party membership can be interpreted both as a proof of apprenticeship in the party before nomination for an important office, and as a safety measure through which the party leaders make sure that the new MPs are faithful 'soldiers' of the party, who then are rewarded for their loyalty.

4. Conclusions

The present article is the only empirical piece published on legislative recruitment in Romania in the last 5 years. However, its primary relevance resides with its focus: analyzing the consequences which a unique transformation of electoral system might produce on the candidate selection strategies of the Romanian parties. Because of the lack of official information, previous works regarding legislative recruitment in Romania failed to give exact figures of legislative turnover. Nowadays, the website of the Chamber of Deputies offers the complete lists of MPs since 1990. Based on them, we could calculate the percentage of new-comers⁵⁷ in the last 4 legislatures: 1996 - 75.58%, 2000 - 33.88%, 2004 - 49.63%, 2008 - 54.12%. Given this very high percentage of newcomers in almost each legislative one cannot claim that the transformation of electoral system produced a structurally fundamental change in recruitment patterns. However, important changes are present and they will be emphasized in the following lines.

57 We systematically excluded from these figures the 12 MP's representing minorities because of the reasons already mentioned.

The first significant finding, not considered previously⁵⁸, refers to the correlation level⁵⁹ acquired by the variable 'county leader's influence' and especially to the degree of probability indicated by the logistic regression of it: it is 17 times more likely for a newcomer to win when running in the right fief. This could be taken as the basis of a new study going deeper into the logic of the relation between the power of county councils' heads and the election of MP's in that particular administrative region. Of course, not all heads of county councils are 'local barons' but the specific context of Romanian elections points to their importance in the contests for SMDs. Thus, the heads of county councils dispose of such mechanisms as mobilizing mayors to campaign for a certain candidate or arranging deals even with local authorities coming from other parties. They can also use their clientelistic networks to urge businessmen to engage in campaign donations or directly, 'electoral bribes'⁶⁰. We acknowledged that the above mentioned finding has several limitations, the most important being the existence of other 'local barons' in the same county: 'everlasting' mayors, who applied the same recipe of clientelism and corruption to build personalized power networks. The influence exerted by these mayors seems indeed to be translated into vote mobilization, and case-studies of small towns and impoverished rural areas could produce valuable information

58 A partial exception might be represented again by Laurențiu Ștefan, 'Career Patterns and Career Preferences of Romanian MP's' in Z. Mansfeldova, D.M. Olson, P. Rakusanova, eds., *Central European Parliaments. First Decade of Democratic Experience and Future Prospective*, Institute of Sociology, Academy of Science of the Czech Republic, (Prague: 2004): 194. The author's point is that many MPs would rather prefer a career as county leader thanks to the great influence provided by such an office. However, he indicates that there are instances where there is a direct connection between these two 'offices' – his example was that of Nicolae Mischie (famous Gorj Baron of PSD), who ran in 2000 for Parliament only to act as a locomotive for the party list.

59 The level of correlation was .480, at *** significance.

60 Buying people's votes (for sums that vary from some dozens to some hundreds of euros) seems to be quite an increasing phenomenon – reported by the press and NGOs. In the local elections held in June 2008, the results from a locality near Bucharest were nullified due to obvious electoral bribes, but the practice has survived.

about a type of voting behavior which is overly-assumed but under-studied.

The second most important finding refers to the extent to which the candidates either chose to or have to finance their campaigns: the overall mean of financial contributions was 74.35% (in the sample of 26 questionnaires received). The delegation of costs, operated by parties can be partially explained by the personalization of campaigns produced through the abolishment of list voting. On the other hand, the move does not mean only that there is a shift in recruitment towards financially potent candidates but also it could bring too much independence vis-à-vis the parties, i.e., weaken the discipline within parties' parliamentary groups. The first signs of the transformation towards the 'delegate logic of representation' were visible in the recent debates on the annual budget: almost every MP had a financial amendment trying to direct funds towards his/her constituency. This is a consistent behavior since many of them, profiting of people's ignorance, had made mayor-like promises in the campaign (building a bridge, repairing the church, more green space for the neighborhood) and now they are trying to show they are really striving to fulfill them. Unfortunately, there is no in-depth study concerning the legislative behavior in Romania, thus any future inquiry will be unable to meaningfully compare past levels of party discipline and the possible transformations.

Another important facet regards the decrease in the percentage of women MPs as compared to the previous 2 legislatures – with 15-16% (although the absolute number of mandates was increased). After the supreme minimum record in 1996 – 20 women elected, their number was constantly increasing on the lists of candidates and in the parliamentary benches. It seems this trend has now come to an end.

The questionnaires also showed that there are important intra-party variations with respect to the methods of candidate selection. The most salient examples came from a PNL MP who argued that her nomination had been established by voting in the county party organization, and from a PDL county organization

that has conducted popularity polls before nominating its candidates. Probably there are more instances in which these different practices are being applied in the same party, and this, we believe, correlates with the increasing degree of autonomy enjoyed by certain local organizations.

Next, the party career continues to be a salient factor in recruitment. The novelty refers to the level of these careers: 75.8% of the newcomers are members of the local and county leadership. Moreover, there is a preeminence of the county level of the party over the others in the nomination of new candidates (more than half).

The importance of party identity is yet another meaningful finding since it shows that the common claimed commitment for the renewal of the political class was largely implemented only by certain parties, while others preferred to rely more on the veterans. In this respect one can distinguish between parties like PDL & PNL and the PSD & UDMR, the difference in percentages of newcomers being more than 10%. All other things being equal, the party identity is a sine qua non for successful candidacy since there is an absolute party dominance of the parliament: not even one independent managed to enter.

Even after the abolishment of the party lists more or less decided by the centre, a significant number of candidates running for the first time for seats (present in this sample) were not residents of that constituency: 20. One could say that generally, the electorate did not perceive their nomination as an abuse, since almost half of them (7) received the largest shares in their constituency, 4 managing even to win more than 50%, and thus, winning directly the seat.

Laurențiu Ștefan takes the experience in public institutions to be a sign of parties giving their members the chance of apprenticeship before recruiting them as MP candidates. We would rather follow the interpretation given by another political scientist, Cristian Preda, who considers the fact that the same people are repeatedly running for local councils, district councils, city halls and Parliament to be a proof of parties' paucity in

human resources. It seems also necessary to say that since the winners of the constituencies and the lucky losers (benefiting from redistribution) were not significantly different on important variables like institutional experience, party career or profession, the media-created hysteria around the redistributions in favor of candidates in 3rd or 4th place is not that justifiable. Maybe people are forgetting too easily the other "anomalies"⁶¹ created by the PR electoral system.

A final conclusion to be made based on all the above factors is that the new electoral system is likely to strengthen the patronage-oriented recruitment, giving at the same time a premium to local political and economic elites acting as selectorates.

Appendix

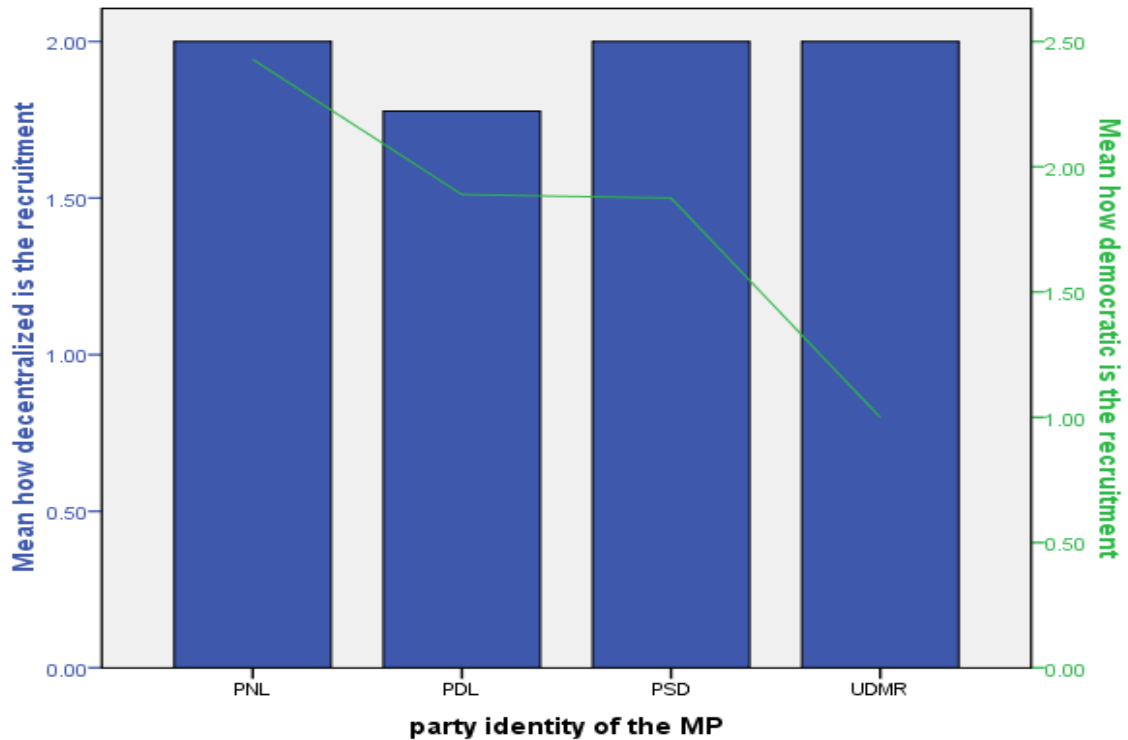
Here are the questions addressed by the questionnaire:

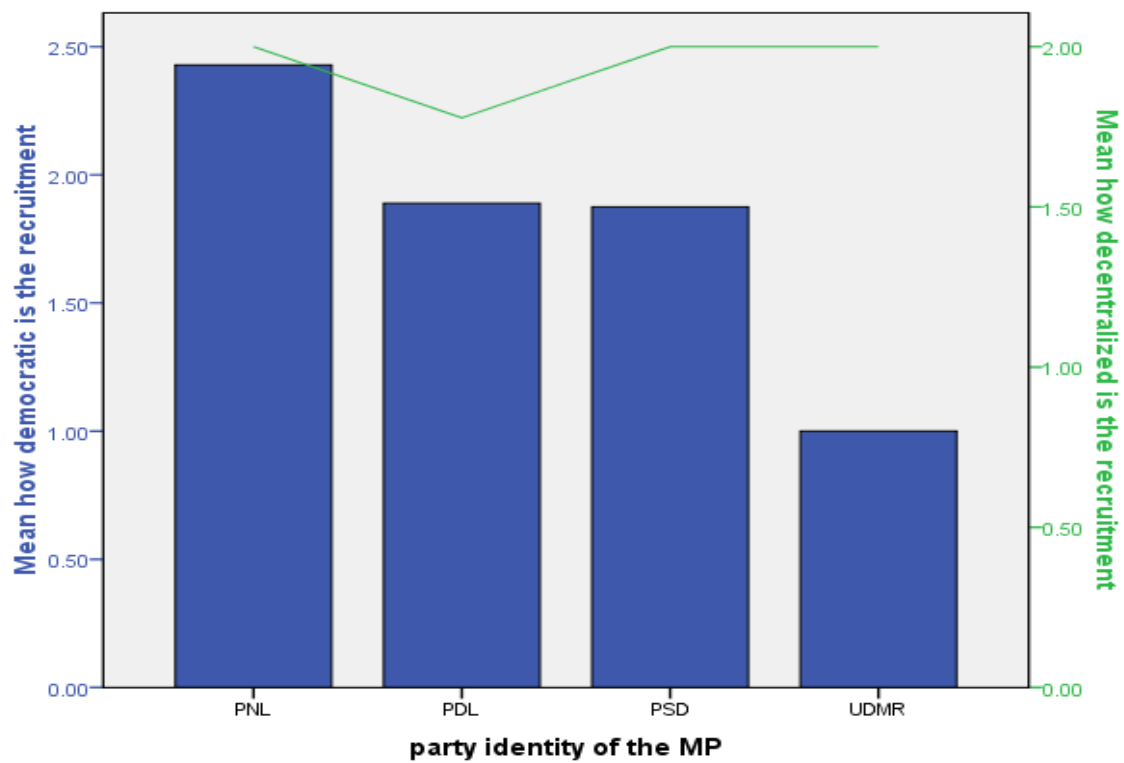
- A. For how long have you been a member of the party?
- B. Do you hold any office in the party? If yes, specify it.
- C. To what organization/branch of the party do you belong?
- D. What personal assets do you consider have determined your selection for candidacy?
- E. What is the percentage of your contribution in financing your personal campaign?
- F. Have you been supported in the campaign by officials (mayors, county councilors, presidents of county councils) from your party? If yes, name the function of the person?
- G. Did you use in the campaign the help of political communication advisers/ specialized firms?
- H. Who nominated you as a candidate?
- I. On a scale from 1 to 5 how democratic/ inclusive is the candidate selection in your party? (1 – the majority of members participate/ even by voting, 2 - appointment by not

61 A good example would be the so called "Giurgiu paradox" (borrowed from professor Florin Feşnic) - in 1996, in that constituency, PDSR won a seat (46,810 votes); UDMR won the second seat (with 269 votes – due to redistribution), although the Democratic Convention won more than 100 times more votes (39,672)

such an inclusive selectorate, 3 - rather mixed, 4 - appointment by a small selectorate, 5- recruitment controlled by the party national leaders)

- J. On a scale from 1 to 5, how decentralized is the candidate selection in your party?
(1 - selection at local level, 2 - selection at county level, 3 - mixed, 4 - mixed with the preponderance of the centre, 5- selection made at the national level)





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*We did not include all the sites (of county councils, city halls or
other central or local institutions) or blogs of politicians which
have been used, but they can be offered upon request